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**Citation for published version:**

Fraser, J 2008, 'Bede, the Firth of Forth and the Location of Urbs Iudeu', *The Scottish Historical Review*, vol. 87, no. 1, pp. 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.3366/E0036924108000024>

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.3366/E0036924108000024](https://doi.org/10.3366/E0036924108000024)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

**Published In:**

The Scottish Historical Review

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JAMES E. FRASER

## Bede, the Firth of Forth, and the Location of *Urbs Iudeu*

### ABSTRACT

The stronghold of Iudeu, which Bede called *urbs Giudi*, appears to have been a royal centre held by the seventh-century kings of the Bernician English, and sufficiently prominent to lend its name to the Firth of Forth in the British and Gaelic languages. The name appears not to have survived in any modern place-name, leaving us reliant on Bede's vague description of the site in *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, as well as a few other scraps of circumstantial evidence, in seeking to locate it. The situation naturally encouraged debate among scholars until, in 1959, identification with Stirling was proposed. This article reviews both that hypothesis and the primary evidence relating to Iudeu, and argues that the Stirling identification is far from satisfactory. Two new alternatives – and a third one, discarded in 1947 – are put forward as sites most in keeping with the crucial evidence provided by Bede, but no firm decision between them seems possible in our present state of knowledge.

If he knew an English (or any other) name for the Firth of Forth, Bede of Wearmouth-Jarrow gives little indication of it in *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, which he completed *ca* 731.<sup>1</sup> To his mind the estuary was a *sinus maris*, a bay of the sea, or else a *fretum maris*, a sea-strait, which 'penetrates far and wide into the lands of Britannia from the eastern sea' (*ab orientali mari. . . Britanniae terras longe lateque inrumpit*), and also 'demarcates the lands of the English and the Picts' (*Anglorum terras Pictorumque disternat*).<sup>2</sup> As Wainwright noted with characteristic perception, the great monastic scholar, who lived at the opposite end of the kingdom of Bernicia, offers no evidence that he regarded the River Forth, as distinct from its estuary, as the Anglo-Pictish border. Nor, in fact, does he give any indication that he knew such a river existed and emptied into the estuary.<sup>3</sup> He had read about *Niuduera regio* in

<sup>1</sup> All references to this text are from Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969) [HE]. Translations follow Colgrave's, with occasional modifications by the present writer.

<sup>2</sup> Bede, HE, i.12; iv.26 (Colgrave and Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 40–1, 428–9).

<sup>3</sup> F. T. Wainwright, 'The Picts and the problem', in F. T. Wainwright (ed.), *The Problem of the Picts* (Edinburgh, 1955), 1–53, at 39–40.

east Fife in the anonymous *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, and had accordingly mentioned it in his own version of that Life, but the district does not feature in *Historia Ecclesiastica*.<sup>4</sup> It is not possible to establish that Bede had anything more than a vague idea of the location of this *regio*, and in fact it eluded plausible identification until 1975.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, he had encountered the much more easily identified stronghold of Din Baer (*Dynbaer*) in Stephen's *Vita Sancti Wilfrithi*, but does not mention Dunbar in his History either.<sup>6</sup> Neither does Bede speak of the stronghold of Din Etin at Edinburgh, which was nevertheless known to Hebridean chroniclers in the seventh century, and is of course much mentioned in the Welsh poetry attributed to Aneirin and Taliesin.<sup>7</sup>

Such negative evidence is dubious grounds for presuming that Bede did not know about Din Etin – he certainly knew about Din Baer and the district of Niuduera. Instead his reticence establishes the point that Bede was not particularly forthcoming in *Historia Ecclesiastica* on the matter of the geography of the Forth basin. His silence was not complete, however, and careful consideration of his geographical references to the region in this text may help scholars to locate the elusive place that Bede called *Giudi*. As Bede understood it, this place was an *urbs*, a stronghold fortified by native, rather than Roman ingenuity, which the Firth of Forth had *in medio sui*.<sup>8</sup> Three different interpretations of the meaning of this phrase between the 1870s and the 1950s led to three competing identifications of Giudi, none of which upon examination is capable of commanding much confidence. Of these it will be convenient to consider the most recent first, because

<sup>4</sup> *Vita Sancti Cuthberti Anonymo*, ii.4; Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, §11; both texts are edited in Bertram Colgrave (ed.), *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert* (Cambridge, 1940).

<sup>5</sup> Archibald A. M. Duncan, *Scotland: the Making of the Kingdom*, Edinburgh History of Scotland vol. i (Edinburgh, 1975), 78. For additional discussion, see Andrew Breeze, 'St Cuthbert, Bede, and the Niduari of Pictland', *Northern History* 40 (2003) 365–8. I am grateful to Dr Breeze for an offprint of this article.

<sup>6</sup> Bertram Colgrave (ed.), *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1927) [VSW], §§34–9.

<sup>7</sup> Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill (eds), *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131). Part I: Text and Translation* (Dublin, 1983) [AU], 638.1; Whitley Stokes, 'The Annals of Tigernach: the third fragment', *Revue Celtique* 17 (1896) 119–263 (reprinted in Whitley Stokes (ed.), *The Annals of Tigernach*, vol. i (Llanerch, 1993)) [AT], 638.1; for discussion see Kenneth H. Jackson, 'Edinburgh and the Anglian occupation of Lothian', in Peter Clemoes (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in some Aspects of the History and Culture presented to Bruce Dickins* (London, 1959), 35–42. See also Ifor Williams (ed.), *The Poems of Taliesin* (Dublin, 1968), XII (*En enw gwledic nef goludawc*), 1.8; Ifor Williams (ed.), *Canu Aneirin* (Cardiff, 1938) [*Gododdin*], *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> Bede, *HE*, i.12 (Colgrave and Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 40–1): *orientalis [sinus] habet in medio sui urbem Giudi, occidentalis supra se, hoc est ad dexteram sui, habet urbem Alcuith*. Peter Hunter Blair, 'The origins of Northumbria', *Archaeologia Aeliana* 25 (1947) 1–51, at 28, wondered 'whatever *urbs* may mean in this context'; in his *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1959), 41, he had looked into this question, and established 'from other passages in which he used the word *urbs*' that Bede meant by it a 'fortified stronghold'. His conclusion was later confirmed and refined by James Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), 99–102 (first published as 'Bede's words for places', in Peter H. Sawyer (ed.), *Places, Names and Graves* (Leeds, 1979), 34–54).

it has held the floor all but unchallenged since it was first proposed in 1959 in a short paper by Angus Graham, long-time Secretary of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland.

*The Stirling Hypothesis*

Graham's hypothesis proceeded from two connected and problematic propositions. The first of these is that in the seventh and eighth centuries there ought to have been an example of what Bede called *urbes* upon the Castle Rock at Stirling. Graham considered the rock to be 'ideally suited to primitive methods of defence', and a place of proven 'strategic importance' down through the centuries, assertions that may be accepted as uncontroversial. The proposition that the rock ought to have been occupied in the 730s is nevertheless a considerable assumption. Archaeologists have yet to vindicate it, and have instead discovered an Early Historic 'citadel' upon the nearby Abbey Craig, where the Wallace Monument now stands.<sup>9</sup>

The second of Graham's propositions was that 'nobody who considers the map of Dark Age Scotland can fail to be puzzled by the absence from it' of this (hypothetical) stronghold at Stirling, given its (inferred) strategic importance.<sup>10</sup> Here grounds must be admitted for considerable doubt, for 'Dark Age' Scottish historiography has not stood still since 1959. Even if it was a place of particular significance, there is no good reason to expect to find notice of a stronghold at Stirling – if one existed – or indeed at Abbey Craig in the historical record. In addition to being infamously thin, the surviving textual coverage of the seventh and eighth centuries in northern Britain is remarkably selective and uneven. In the main, it enables scholars to look across the landscape of Early Christian northern Britain from the standpoint of the monastery at Iona, or else the monasteries at which Bede and the other historiographers and hagiographers of eighth-century Northumbria composed their works. If any place failed to capture the particular attentions of such observers, for whatever reason, it shall not be attested in our written sources. Many places failed to do so, and are not attested. In fact, the list of native strongholds in Scotland that are known or suspected by archaeologists to have been occupied in Early Historic times, but go unattested (or unidentified) in the historical record, is not short. As yet it includes even the relatively massive coastal promontory fort at Burghead on the Moray coast, as well

<sup>9</sup> I am most grateful to Lorna Main, Archaeology Officer, Stirling Council, for corresponding with me on the matter of Abbey Craig, and providing me with a briefing note and C14 dating information from her excavations in 2001, which 'identified two phases of fortification and exposed a section of the outer wall face' of a timber-lace/vitrified rampart. The structures produced two radiocarbon dates in the period 500–780 AD, with a strong seventh-century bias, and on this basis the excavator proposed that Abbey Craig bore the strategic Early Historic stronghold that Graham expected to find at Castle Rock.

<sup>10</sup> Angus Graham, 'Giudi', *Antiquity* 33 (1959) 63–5, at 63.

as the impressive (lost) stronghold at Clatchard Craig in Strathearn, and any number of strongholds south of the River Clyde, including of course Tynron Doon and the Mote of Mark.<sup>11</sup>

Both of Graham's opening gambits being open to such question, a scholar could be forgiven for refusing to take the bait or joining him further in his quest to find 'some record of a Dark Age Stirling', which may (but need not) have existed, and may (but need not) have been important, and need not, in any case, be attested in the sources.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, the rest of the case offers more of the same assumption-led thinking. On top of his first two vulnerable premises, Graham presumed still further that Bede 'was not himself familiar with the Firth of Forth', and that, additionally, he had 'depended on the reports of sailors or other casual informants' for his geographical information. This pair of propositions is both more crucial to Graham's argument, and more unsatisfactory, than the first pair. In the very same chapter of *Historia Ecclesiastica* in which he described the location of *urbs Giudi*, Bede wrote the following about the second-century Antonine Wall:

*cuius operis ibidem facti, id est ualli latissimi et altissimi, usque hodie certissima uestigia cernere licet. incipit autem duorum ferme milium spatio a monasterio Aebbercurnig ad occidentum in loco qui sermone Pictorum Peanfahel, lingua autem Anglorum Penneltun appellatur, et tendens contra occidentem terminatur iuxta urbem Alcluith.*<sup>13</sup>

The clearest traces of the work constructed there, to wit a wall, most wide and most high, can be seen to this day. It starts almost two miles west of the monastery at Abercorn in the place which is called in Pictish speech *Peanfahel*, and in the English tongue *Penneltun*; and stretching far westward, terminates beside *urbs Alcluith*.

Bede had mentioned *urbs Alcluith*, now Dumbarton Rock, earlier in the chapter, writing that the Firth of Clyde, like the Firth of Forth, *Brittaniae terras longe lateque inrumpit*, and also 'has above it, to wit, on its right hand, *urbs Alcluith*, which in their tongue denotes "Clyde Rock", for it is close by the river of its name' (*supra se, hoc est ad dexteram sui, habet urbem Alcluith, quod lingua eorum significat Petram Cluit; est enim iuxta fluuium nominis illius*).<sup>14</sup> In fact, Bede introduced Clyde Rock and Giudi together, as if they were somehow linked in his mind, and did so moreover in a chapter concerned with the erection of the two Roman walls in Britain.

<sup>11</sup> For recent surveys of Burghead's archaeology, see Ian Ralston, *The Hill-Forts of Pictland Since 'The Problem of the Picts'*, Groam House Lecture (Rosemarkie, 2004), 28–9; Leslie Alcock, *Kings and Warriors, Craftsmen and Priests in Northern Britain AD 550–850* (Edinburgh, 2003), 192–7. For the details of the excavations at Clatchard Craig, see Joanna Close-Brooks, 'Excavations at Clatchard Craig, Fife', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland [PSAS]* 116 (1986) 117–84. For a handy gazetteer of sites, only a handful of which are attested in our sources, see Alcock, *Kings and Warriors*, 447–50.

<sup>12</sup> Graham, 'Giudi', 63.

<sup>13</sup> Bede, *HE*, i.12 (Colgrave and Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 42–3).

<sup>14</sup> Bede, *HE*, i.12 (Colgrave and Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 40–1).

These important points have attracted comment, and shall be revisited below. For the present purposes, it is to be noted that the actual distance as the crow flies westwards from Abercorn to the site of the Roman fort of Velunia(s) at Carriden, the eastern terminus of the Antonine Wall, is six kilometres (just under four miles), almost twice the distance given by Bede.<sup>15</sup> Other than this underestimate, Bede's understanding of the geography of the coast of West Lothian is not particularly problematic. It can be verified, fortuitously, from the modern place-name of Kinneil and its antecedents that *Peanfahel*, 'wall's end', was indeed a place-name in this area, just as Bede reported.<sup>16</sup> The English name *Penneltun* probably denotes a royal estate.<sup>17</sup> Thus at this solitary point at which it can be scrutinised, Bede gives us little cause to impugn his mental map of the Firth of Forth, even if, for the most part, he was inclined to be reticent about its geography.

As regards Graham's fourth assumption – that Bede's information was nautical in character – he failed to grasp the potential significance of Bede's use of the monastery at Abercorn as a point of reference. Elsewhere than the chapter quoted above, *Historia Ecclesiastica* offers still more information about this same neighbourhood, observing, in a phrase noted already, that Abercorn 'was in English territory but close to the strait (*fretum*) which demarcates the lands of the English and the Picts'.<sup>18</sup> Thus in both chapters of the History in which he referred to the Firth of Forth, Bede also referred to Abercorn, and discussed its geographical situation. That his information about Forth geography in this work came ultimately from Abercorn must therefore be considered a strong possibility. Its likelihood is only strengthened by the fact that Bede was reasonably well informed about the career of Trumwini, bishop of Abercorn. In *Historia Ecclesiastica*, he related that this man had become the place's first bishop in 681, whence he held jurisdiction over a Pictish province (*prouincia Pictorum*), that he had joined the Northumbrian king Ecgrith in the retrieval of (St) Cuthbert from his Farne hermitage after the reluctant hermit was elected bishop of Hexham, and that he had 'retired' from Abercorn after Ecgrith's calamitous death in Pictland in 685, going to Whitby, where

<sup>15</sup> Distances have been calculated by the *Ordnance Survey Interactive Atlas of Great Britain* CD-ROM (2nd edn, 1997). The eastern termination of the wall at Carriden has been established beyond reasonable doubt by G. B. Bailey and D. F. Devereux, 'The eastern terminus of the Antonine Wall: a review', *PSAS* 117 (1987) 93–104, and David Dumville, 'The eastern terminus of the Antonine Wall: twelfth- or thirteenth-century evidence', *PSAS* 124 (1994) 293–8. Inscription evidence establishes that the Roman name of the fort was *Velunia(s)*, see I. A. Richmond and K. A. Steer, '*Castellum Veluniate* and civilians on a Roman frontier', *PSAS* 90 (1956–7) 1–6; A. L. F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London, 1981), 490.

<sup>16</sup> On these place-names, see W. J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926) [CPNS], 346–8; Thomas Owen Clancy, 'Philosopher-king: Nechtan mac Der-Ilei', *Scottish Historical Review* [SHR] 83 (2004) 125–49, at 142.

<sup>17</sup> Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*, 113–15.

<sup>18</sup> Bede, *HE*, iv.26 (Colgrave and Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 428–9).



Trumwini lived many years, helping Abbess Aelfled to run the place.<sup>19</sup> Aelfled was Ecgfrith's sister, and Bede's evidence taken collectively suggests that Trumwini had a close connection with the Northumbrian royal court. He may even have been a brother or close kinsman of Trumhere, whom Bede called a kinsman of Ecgfrith's Deiran mother Eanfled.<sup>20</sup> In passing Bede noted that Trumwini had 'commended his own people to his friends in such monasteries as he could find' after abandoning Abercorn. Some of these monks may have come to Wearmouth-Jarrow with their knowledge of Forth geography from a West Lothian perspective. Whether his information came from such men or more indirectly, it is reasonable to conclude from *Historia Ecclesiastica* that Bede came to know something about Abercorn and its neighbourhood through what he had come to know about the career of Trumwini. Such an inference is, finally, just an inference, but one arising from a detailed textual consideration of what Bede reveals about his understanding of Forth geography. It may have more to commend it, therefore, than Graham's baseless assumption that Bede knew nothing, save what he could learn from Northumbrian sailors.

Traversing Bede's 'almost two miles' eastwards from Carriden, in the direction of the church-site at Abercorn, leaves us well short of our destination. It brings us instead to just about the modern Abercorn-Carriden parish boundary, which lies a little more than three kilometres (just over two miles) as the crow flies from Carriden. Abercorn, like various other important monasteries mentioned by Bede, ought to have been endowed with a *possessio* or estate large enough to support something like thirty farmsteads, as in the case of Ripon, another Northumbrian monastery that became an episcopal seat in 679.<sup>21</sup> If the possibility may be entertained that Bede's two-mile estimate of the distance between Abercorn and *Peanfahel* relates to the boundary of such a *possessio* (at about the modern parish boundary), and not to Abercorn's monastic buildings proper, this would lead to there being nothing at all amiss about his West Lothian geography.<sup>22</sup>

The first four of Graham's assumptions leading him to Stirling being readily set aside, the fifth, relying entirely upon acceptance of the others, is flimsiest of all, having no firm legs to stand on. Unfortunately for the Stirling hypothesis, it is also the most crucial proposition of the

<sup>19</sup> Bede, *HE*, iv.12; iv.26, iv.28 (Colgrave and Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 370–1, 428–9, 436–7).

<sup>20</sup> Bede, *HE*, iii.24 (Colgrave and Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 292–3). Trumhere was made abbot of Gilling upon the murder of his kinsman Oswini in 651 (iii.14, iii.24); according to Bede, he had been trained by the Irish (iii.24), and was consecrated by them when he was made bishop of the Mercians during Oswy's dominion over that kingdom (iii.21, iii.24) (Colgrave and Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 256–7, 280–1, 292–5).

<sup>21</sup> Bede, *HE*, iv.12, v.19 (Colgrave and Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 370–1, 520–1); Stephen, *VSW*, §8. It is however unclear whether Eadhaed, the exiled bishop of Lindsey who received Ripon in 679, was given a see as well.

<sup>22</sup> I am grateful to Thomas Owen Clancy for pointing me in this direction.

five, for it is here that Graham engaged directly with Bede's crucial evidence. Graham proposed that the ignorant and nautically informed Bede 'may well have imagined the Firth to be a more or less triangular opening'. If so, this speculative argument runs, *in medio sui* could be Bede's way of saying 'at its apex', referring to an angle formed by the north and south coasts of the 'triangular' estuary. It is odd, but characteristic of his methods in this paper, that Graham, having planted this seed, promptly and completely abandoned this geometrical model, despite its crucial link to Bede's only explicit geographical information pertaining to Giudi. One reluctantly suspects that the reason for this decision was that 'at its apex' could bring Graham no closer to his destination than Alloa, some eight kilometres from the Castle Rock at Stirling as the crow flies – and perhaps double that length along the present meandering course of the River Forth.

Stirling, Graham now argued anew, is a suitable site for Giudi because 'it is at the highest point that a seaman would be likely to reach' if he sailed up the Forth estuary. Here at least the reasoning becomes clear behind the nautical dimension previously introduced by Graham to his argument, which we have seen is quite unnecessary for explaining Bede's geographical understanding. His basic point about Stirling's accessibility by sea must be conceded, of course, and not least because Graham was unrivalled in his day in the study of Scotland's historical harbours.<sup>23</sup> It is neither here nor there, however, as regards the geometrical model for Bede's mental map that he was relying on at first in order to meet the crucial demands of *in medio sui*. It is, needless to say, all but impossible to reconcile 'at its highest navigable point' with *in medio sui*. As a result, it must be said that it was at best optimistic, and at worst disingenuous of Graham to have concluded that his proposition 'exactly fit[s]' Bede's Latin with 'no real strain', especially without the triangular geometry that had produced his 'apex'. If there was any doubt, Graham sealed his abandonment of that key speculative geometrical argument by suggesting that his reading of *in medio sui* 'would be even more natural if the *sinus* was thought of as a kind of rounded pocket',<sup>24</sup> and so not a triangle at all.

The Firth of Forth is neither an isosceles triangle with 'evenly converging shores' nor 'a kind of rounded pocket'. What is more, Bede did not think it was either of these things. Graham clung to *sinus*, the word used by Bede for the estuary when he first introduced it (and connected it with Giudi). In his other two references, however, and in connection with Abercorn, Bede called it a *fretum*, a strait or, in Colgrave's translation, a channel. A *fretum* does not have 'evenly converging shores', nor converging shores at all, and is certainly not

<sup>23</sup> Angus Graham, 'Archaeological notes on some harbours in eastern Scotland', *PSAS* 101 (1968–9) 200–85, at 278 discusses Stirling (and Giudi); Angus Graham, 'Old harbours and landing-places on the east coast of Scotland', *PSAS* 108 (1976–77) 332–65.

<sup>24</sup> Graham, 'Giudi', 64.



‘a kind of rounded pocket’. This uncomfortable fact perhaps explains Graham’s preference for *sinus*, and his failure to address *fretum*. Despite his wishful speculations, it is most unlikely that Bede envisioned the Firth of Forth as having a particular apex. The fifth of Graham’s assumptions, in other words, holds as little water as the others. It cannot be assumed that Bede had no access to reasonably accurate descriptions of the estuary, especially as viewed from Abercorn, where the notion that it was a *fretum* is particularly likely to have arisen. Neither can it be assumed that Bede’s only informants can have been sailors, as opposed to monks who had once lived in West Lothian. A translation of *in medio sui* as ‘at its highest navigable point’ surely strains credulity, especially given the treacherous path one is required to follow even to reach that stage of the argument. Angus Graham was determined, one way or another, to make Stirling *urbs Giudi*. A scholar would require to be equally determined to accept his case as proven, or even likely.

Kenneth Jackson was such a scholar, to whom Graham had in fact expressed his thanks for support received in formulating his hypothesis. Four years later the great Celticist embraced the ‘ingenious’ and ‘wholly satisfactory’ hypothesis in print.<sup>25</sup> Five years later still, in a footnote to his edition of Bede’s History, Colgrave however ignored Graham’s hypothesis – if he was aware of it – and observed of *urbs Giudi* that ‘its site has never been identified’, referring nevertheless to ‘some possibility that it may be Inveresk’, an argument explored below.<sup>26</sup> That Stirling was Giudi had nevertheless become conventional, and was enshrined in the Second Edition of the Ordnance Survey’s *Map of Britain in the Dark Ages*.<sup>27</sup> It was the mid-1970s, shortly prior to his death in 1979, before Graham’s case was evaluated in print by Rutherford, who expressed doubt that ‘at its apex’ was a ‘happy’ reading of *in medio sui*.<sup>28</sup> However, Rutherford did not embark upon the detailed discussion of the flaws in Graham’s argument that has been offered above, apparently believing that it had collapsed with only that slightest of nudges. In his commentary on Bede’s History, Wallace-Hadrill noted with wise caution that *urbs Giudi* was ‘possibly Inveresk but also possibly Stirling’.<sup>29</sup>

Professor Jackson took rather a different view. Abandoning his more cautious positive appraisal of Graham’s work twenty years before, in

<sup>25</sup> Kenneth Jackson, ‘On the Northern British section of Nennius’, in Nora Chadwick (ed.), *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border* (Cambridge, 1963), 20–62, at 36–7.

<sup>26</sup> Colgrave and Mynors (eds), *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History*, 40 n.3.

<sup>27</sup> Ordnance Survey, *Map of Britain in the Dark Ages*, 2nd edn (Chessington, 1966). See also Duncan, *Scotland: the Making of the Kingdom*, 61; but see also Campbell, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*, 13, where Stirling is named, but with a question mark (first published as ‘Bede’, in T. A. Dorey (ed.), *Latin Historians* (London, 1966), 159–90).

<sup>28</sup> Anthony Rutherford, ‘Giudi revisited’, *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 26 (1974–76) 440–4, at 441.

<sup>29</sup> J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People: a Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1988), 17.

1981 Jackson pounced upon Rutherford's objections and provided a blow-by-blow restatement of the 'very convincing' Stirling hypothesis, but offered no new positive evidence to support it. Indeed, Jackson was disposed even to repeat Graham's five assumptions, including that 'it is not credible that such a site [as Stirling] should have been left unoccupied' in the period in question.<sup>30</sup> Thus forcefully reiterated by Jackson, the Stirling hypothesis has held sway for more than twenty-five additional years, and has indeed become a factoid adopted in print by, amongst others, the present writer.<sup>31</sup> Having now belatedly examined Graham's case, I see no compelling reason to accept it, and (more to the point) several reasons to regard it with acute scepticism.

### *The Insular Hypothesis*

For alternative readings of *in medio sui*, one must return to work undertaken by scholars who had explored the question before Graham's hypothesis swept their work aside. The earliest known to the present writer was offered by Skene in the 1870s. In his consideration of the locations of places named in the Flavian survey of northern Britain preserved in Ptolemy's *Geographia*, he mistakenly placed the Uotadinian *polis* Alauna, since identified as the Roman fort at Low Leachild in Northumberland, in the island of Inchkeith in the Firth of Forth.<sup>32</sup> In a footnote, indicating uncertainty on the part of a scholar who could present his deductions as facts, Skene observed that 'this seems to be the town mentioned by Bede' in his description of the position of *urbs Giudi*.<sup>33</sup> Anderson seems either to have sensed Skene's uncertainty, or to have rejected his identification, noting in 1908 that Giudi 'has not been identified'.<sup>34</sup> Forty years later Hunter Blair was more explicit, rejecting Skene's Inchkeith hypothesis as 'scarcely conceivable', and suggesting without conviction that, 'if it has to be supposed that *urbs Giudi* was an

<sup>30</sup> Kenneth Jackson, 'Bede's *Urbs Giudi*: Stirling or Cramond?', *Cambridge [later Cambrian] Medieval Celtic Studies* [CMCS] 2 (1981) 1–7, at 4–5.

<sup>31</sup> Alfred P. Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men: Scotland AD 80–1000*, New History of Scotland vol. i (London, 1984), 32, 231, explicitly mentioned English possession of Stirling, but did not name *Iudeu*; Leslie Alcock, 'The activities of potentates in Celtic Britain: a positivist approach', in S. T. Driscoll and M. R. Níeke (eds), *Power and Politics in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1988), 22–39, at 32, was more cautious; see also John T. Koch, *The Gododdin of Aneirin: Text and Context from Dark-Age North Britain* (Cardiff and Andover MA, 1997), xxii, lxx, xcix; James E. Fraser, *The Battle of Dunnichen 685* (Stroud, 2002), 47; Andrew Breeze, 'Some Celtic place-names of Scotland: Ptolemy's *Verubium Promontorium*, Bede's *Urbs Giudi*, Mendick, Minto, and Panlathy', *Scottish Language* 23 (2004) 57–67, at 58, 60–1.

<sup>32</sup> Rivet and Smith, *Place-Names of Roman Britain*, 245; the possibility is raised here that this is a ghost-name repeating the Ardoch Alauna.

<sup>33</sup> William F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland: a History of Ancient Alban*, 2nd edn, vol. i (Edinburgh, 1886), 71.

<sup>34</sup> Alan O. Anderson, *Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers A.D. 500 to 1286* (London, 1908), 24n–25n.

island stronghold, Cramond Island would have been a more suitable site'.<sup>35</sup> It is astonishing that this perceptive suggestion has never been examined more closely.

For his part Graham acknowledged that taking *in medio sui* as a reference to an island 'in the midst' of the waters of the estuary was 'in formal agreement' with Bede's Latin, but ignoring Cramond Island and other alternatives he joined his voice with Hunter Blair's in rejecting Inchkeith as self-evidently 'absurd'.<sup>36</sup> One hardly feels compelled to gainsay that rejection, as we shall see, but it is nevertheless significant that these scholars (and others besides more recently) have been unanimous in agreeing, in Jackson's words, that 'the only really obvious interpretation' of *in medio sui* is that the *urbs* stood 'on an island in the middle of the firth'.<sup>37</sup> We may indeed note in passing Graham's attempt to have his cake and eat it, having already argued that *in medio sui* should mean either 'at its apex' or 'at its highest navigable point' – or perhaps both. The Castle Rock at Stirling, he argued, might have looked like 'a kind of island, rising abruptly from the middle of the Forth carse-lands'.<sup>38</sup> Yet no-one would have thought to look for such an 'island' in the carse of Stirling – and indeed before Graham no-one did – were they not already taking *in medio sui* to mean something else entirely.

The point that Giudi might lie in an island is strengthened by two other references to it, one of which was brought to the attention of scholars in this connection by Anderson in 1908, and comes from an Irish tractate on the mothers of saints:<sup>39</sup>

*Alma ingen rig Cruithnech mathair Seirb m. Proic rig Canandan Egipti 7 is esin in sruthsenoir congeibh Cuillennros hi Sraith Erenn hi Comgellaibh eter Sliabh nOcel 7 Mur nGiudan.*<sup>40</sup>

Alma, daughter of a Pictish king, the mother of Serb mac Proic, king of Canaan of Egypt; and he [Serb, i.e., St Serf] is the venerable old man who possesses Culross in Strathearn in *Comgellaig*, between the Ochil upland and the sea of Giudiu.<sup>41</sup>

Anderson recognised the significance of *Muir nGiudan*, and made the perceptive association with Bede's *urbs Giudi*. He was not apparently aware of another reference to this 'sea of Giudiu' which appears in one

<sup>35</sup> Hunter Blair, 'Origins of Northumbria', 28.

<sup>36</sup> Graham, 'Giudi', 64.

<sup>37</sup> Jackson, 'Bede's *Urbs Giudi*', 2–3; see also Rutherford, 'Giudi revisited', 441.

<sup>38</sup> Graham, 'Giudi', 64.

<sup>39</sup> Anderson, *Scottish Annals*, 25n.

<sup>40</sup> Pádraig Ó Riain (ed.), *Corpus Genealogiarum Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Dublin, 1985), §722.106.

<sup>41</sup> This translation follows William Reeves, *The Culdees of the British Islands* (Dublin, 1864; repr. Felinbach, 1994), 124n. On *i Comgellaib*, see Clancy, 'Philosopher-king', 138–9.

of the *Gododdin* elegies from the so-called ‘B-text’ of that collection:

*tra merin iodeo tri leo yg caat  
tri guaid frant fraidus leo  
bubon a guoreu bar deo.*<sup>42</sup>

From beyond the sea of Iodeo, valiant in battle,  
Thrice as fierce as a fierce lion,  
Bubon wrought with mighty wrath.<sup>43</sup>

Taken together, and with consideration for the geographical perspectives assumed in both texts, these two vernacular sources establish beyond doubt that *Muir nGiudan/merin Iodeo* was the Firth of Forth. Bede did not name the estuary in *Historia Ecclesiastica*, but he did name Giudi, and located it *in medio sui*. It therefore seems worth serious consideration that ‘sea of Giudi’ was a name with which he too was familiar, and that this was the name by which the Firth of Forth was generally known at this time. Rutherford regarded it as ‘awkward’ for the Stirling hypothesis that the Firth of Forth should be called (as it were) ‘the sea of Stirling’; this seems a compelling point, should one be required to belabour further Graham’s crumbling case. Indeed, it seems particularly unlikely that a British court poet at Edinburgh should have named the Forth estuary for a stronghold at Stirling more than eight kilometres inland, when his own Din Etin was less than four kilometres from the Forth coast.

In 1963 Professor Jackson confirmed that Middle Welsh *Iodeo*, ought to have developed into (hypothetical) Modern Welsh *\*Iddew*, and that Bede’s *Giudi* seems a reasonable attempt to render the name into English phonetics.<sup>44</sup> He was working with particular reference to the older spelling of the name attested in the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum*:

*Osguid, filius Eadlfrid regnavit xxviii annis et vi mensibus... Et ipse occidit Pantha in campo Gai, et nunc facta est strages Gai campi, et reges Brittonum interfecti sunt, qui exierant cum rege Pantha in expeditione usque ad urbem quae vocatur Iudeu./[new chapter] Tunc reddidit Osguid omnes divitias quae erant cum eo in urbe usque in manu Penda, et Penda distribuit ea regibus Brittonum, id est Atbret Iudeu.*<sup>45</sup>

Oswy son of Aedlfrith reigned twenty-eight years and six months... And he killed Penda in Maes Gai, and now the massacre of Maes Gai was made, and British kings were killed who had gone out with King Penda on the

<sup>42</sup> *Gododdin*, ll.1209–11.

<sup>43</sup> This translation follows Joseph P. Clancy, in Thomas Owen Clancy (ed.), *The Triumph Tree: Scotland’s Earliest Poetry AD 550–1350* (Edinburgh, 1998), 73.

<sup>44</sup> Jackson, ‘Northern British section of Nennius’, 37. This explanation fails to explain the *g* in Gaelic *Giudiu*, on which see Breeze, ‘Some Celtic place-names’ (2004), 59.

<sup>45</sup> E. Faral (ed.), *La Légende Arthurienne: études et documents*, vol. iii (Paris, 1929) [HB], 4–62, §§64–5. The two manuscripts of HB that include these chapters disagree about the phrase *usque in manu Penda*; see the Appendix to this paper.

expedition as far as the *urbs* that is called *Iudeu*. Then Oswy gave back all the riches that were with him in the *urbs* right into the hand of Penda, and Penda distributed them to the British kings, to wit, 'the restitution of Iudeu'.

Breeze has since built upon Jackson's philological work, putting forward a cogent case for believing that *Giudi* and *Giudiu* represent secondary attempts to render the primary name *Iudeu*, that the place-name is ultimately British in origin, and that it means 'place of a king'.<sup>46</sup> Such an etymology, if accepted, unfortunately offers no extra assistance in locating *Giudi*.

This string of additional notices of *Iudeu* (as *Giudi* shall henceforth be called here) by Irish and Welsh writers is consonant with Bede's presentation: it was an *urbs* or native fortress, and it was capable of lending its name to the Firth of Forth. A location on an island like Inchkeith *in medio sui* would certainly be suitable as regards the second point, but is difficult to reconcile with the implication of the story of 'the restitution of Iudeu' that the place was besieged. Here again, however, Cramond Island is an exception among the Forth islands, being a tidal island accessible on foot at low tide. Indeed, *Historia Brittonum* relates two stories in which Anglo-Saxon kings were besieged by British kings at tidal islands, but had the last laugh as a result of the sudden death of the erstwhile successful besieger. A third island-siege, recorded in the Cambro-Latin chronicle *Annales Cambriae*, apparently from an eighth-century original, in which the successful (Anglo-Saxon) besieger is again ultimately overthrown by his (British) victim, has been associated with these episodes in *Historia Brittonum*, with the suggestion that together they bespeak 'an established narrative trope' among the early medieval Britons.<sup>47</sup> If *Iudeu* too was situated in an island, the story of the *atbret* there would represent a further example of this 'trope' in *Historia Brittonum*, Penda and his British allies having been destroyed shortly afterwards by the very king they had besieged. For this and other reasons, Cramond Island cannot be ruled out lightly as a suitable location for *Atbret Iudeu*. At the least, it may be asserted that, after the application of current principles in textual analysis, Hunter Blair's unexamined hypothesis of sixty years ago emerges with far more in its favour than Graham's Stirling hypothesis.

#### *The Inveresk Hypothesis*

Nevertheless, although it was he who first proposed Cramond Island, Hunter Blair did not believe that *Iudeu* lay there. As early as 1908,

<sup>46</sup> Breeze, 'Some Celtic place-names' (2004), 59–60. The present writer lacks the philological expertise to pass judgement on this proposition.

<sup>47</sup> Alex Woolf, 'Caedwalla Rex Brettonum and the passing of the Old North', *Northern History* 41 (2004) 5–24, at 10, building upon the work of Patrick Sims-Williams, 'The death of Urien', *CMCS* 32 (1996) 25–56; see *HB*, §§43–4, 63; Faral (ed.), *Légende Arthurienne*, 44–50 [*Annales Cambriae*]; s.a. 629, 630, 631. My thanks to Professor Clancy for reminding me of this discussion.

Anderson had argued that *in medio sui* did not ‘necessarily’ place Iudeu on an island.<sup>48</sup> Forty years later, Hunter Blair perceptively suggested that Bede had in mind some kind of link between Clyde Rock and Iudeu, which made it suitable for them to be named together. Graham too would pick up this point, arguing that Bede ‘had in mind the principal place on each of the two firths’,<sup>49</sup> and we shall return below to the idea of conceptual association between the two places. Hunter Blair believed that Bede was ‘contrasting the positions’ of the two *urbes*, and on that basis offered a third alternative translation of *in medio sui* to have been proposed to date. Noting Clyde Rock’s actual position ‘at the head’ of the Clyde estuary, he argued that a reading of *in medio sui* as ‘not out in the middle of the Firth, but half way along it’ conveyed the (perceived) necessary element of contrast in Bede’s presentation, without requiring Iudeu to lie upon an island.<sup>50</sup> Anderson may have been thinking along similar lines. Hunter Blair couched his hypothesis in cautious language, and, apart from putting forward ‘Cramond itself’ and Inveresk in Musselburgh as occupying ‘suitable positions’, Hunter Blair did not attempt a conclusive identification of Iudeu.

In 1949, two years after Hunter Blair published this hypothesis, Richmond and Crawford published a paper first read in 1937, in which they analysed the place-names recorded in the seventh-century Ravenna Cosmography with the expert assistance of (by 1949 Sir) Ifor Williams, who commented upon their notes on each name. They suggested that the name conventionally read as *Evidensca* in the Cosmography be read *\*Eiudensca*. Based upon their understanding of this difficult text, they supposed that *\*Eiudensca* was ‘almost certainly Inveresk, known to Bede as *Urbs Giudi*’.<sup>51</sup> There is no hint in this study that Richmond or Crawford were aware of Hunter Blair’s ‘half way along’ reading of *in medio sui* published in 1947. However, Hunter Blair had expressed gratitude to Richmond for ‘helpful criticism’ of that article. It therefore seems unlikely that Hunter Blair, Richmond and Crawford arrived at their Inveresk hypothesis independently.<sup>52</sup> In their appendix, Richmond and Crawford employed more cautious language regarding Iudeu. Under *Evidensca* (and not *\*Eiudensca*), they suggested that the place was ‘perhaps’ to be equated with *urbs Giudi*, *urbs Iudeu* and *merin Iodeo*, and that Inveresk ‘is a tempting identification’, rather than the ‘almost certain’ one it had been in the body of the paper.<sup>53</sup> The caution exhibited here may have been Williams’s: according to Crawford, the entry was based upon his comments. The fact that the Firth of Forth bore the name *Muir nGiudan/merin Iodeo*, they observed,

<sup>48</sup> Anderson, *Scottish Annals*, 4n.

<sup>49</sup> Graham, ‘Giudi’, 63.

<sup>50</sup> Hunter Blair, ‘Origins of Northumbria’, 28.

<sup>51</sup> I. A. Richmond and O. G. S. Crawford, ‘The British section of the Ravenna Cosmography’, *Archaeologia* 93 (1949), 1–50, at 14.

<sup>52</sup> Hunter Blair, ‘Origins of Northumbria’, 1n.

<sup>53</sup> Richmond and Crawford, ‘British section of the Ravenna Cosmography’, 34.



‘indicates that the place [Iudeu] was on the sea-shore’.<sup>54</sup> This reasonable inference has been put forward already as a strike against Graham’s hypothesis, but it must be noted that it takes for granted Hunter Blair’s pessimism about the possibility of locating Iudeu in an island.

Richmond and Crawford did not refer to Hunter Blair’s work in 1949, but he referred to theirs when he returned to the question in 1954, and again in 1959. Now he stated it as a fact, rather than a possible reading of Bede’s Latin, that *urbs Giudi* ‘according to Bede lay halfway along the Firth of Forth’,<sup>55</sup> referring (with notable caution) to the *Evidensca* hypothesis of Richmond and Crawford.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, Hunter Blair had by now become aware of *Muir nGiudan*. With great ingenuity, he connected *Niud-* in the name of the Pictish *Niuduera regio*, mentioned above, with *nGiud-*, and proposed that it might be ‘a corrupt form of Bede’s *Giudi*’.<sup>57</sup> Professor Jackson’s subsequent silence on this doubtful point of linguistics speaks for itself as regards its likelihood. Hunter Blair’s reading of *in medio sui* as ‘halfway along it’ was nevertheless on its way to becoming a factoid when Graham torpedoed it in 1959. Graham’s position that Bede should have used a similar phrase to *ad dexteram sui* to refer to a location along the coast, as he did for Clyde Rock in the same passage, seems perceptive and compelling. It may be added that Hunter Blair’s sense of contrasted locations relied upon the *actual* position of Clyde Rock at the head of its estuary, but Bede himself gives no indication in the text that he was aware that *urbs Alchuith* stood at such a location.

Graham further criticised Hunter Blair and the others on the basis that, to his mind, neither Inveresk nor Cramond, the sites of Roman forts, ‘possesses the natural defensive qualities that would have appealed to Dark Age natives’.<sup>58</sup> This was not an inconsiderable point at the time, and it has been augmented since by Campbell’s conclusion, after careful analysis, that for Bede an *urbs* was a stronghold of native construction, rather than a Roman one.<sup>59</sup> Further, as an aid to Graham’s hypothesis, Jackson dismissed the hypothetical equation of *Evidensca* and *Iudeu* by Richmond and Crawford as ‘far-fetched on philological grounds’. Rutherford subsequently sought to restore the credibility of Hunter Blair’s ‘half way along it’ reading, if not the Inveresk hypothesis.<sup>60</sup> He revived the twenty-five-year-old emendation

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Peter Hunter Blair, ‘The Bernicians and their northern frontier’, in Nora Chadwick (ed.), *Studies in Early British History* (Cambridge, 1954), 137–72, at 164.

<sup>56</sup> Hunter Blair, ‘Bernicians’, 164; Hunter Blair, *Introduction to Anglo-Saxon England*, 41 (and n.).

<sup>57</sup> Hunter Blair, ‘Bernicians’, 168n; *V. Sanct. Cuthberti Anon.*, ii.4.

<sup>58</sup> Graham, ‘Giudi’, 64.

<sup>59</sup> See n.8 above. This point has been made, with reference to Cramond, by Craig Cessford, ‘Post-Severan Cramond: a late Roman and Early Historic British and Anglo-Saxon religious centre?’, *The Heroic Age* 4 (2001), <http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/4/Cessford.html> [last verified 3.6.2007].

<sup>60</sup> Rutherford, ‘*Giudi* revisited’, 441.

of *Evidensca* as *\*Eiudensca*, and suggested a further, ingenious emendation of *\*Eiudensca*, separating it into two words corrupted by the Ravenna Cosmographer, *\*Eiudei* and *\*Isca*. The latter he associated with Inveresk, and the former, with Iudeu, which he accordingly identified as Cramond (and not Cramond Island), a location that Hunter Blair had once suggested.<sup>61</sup> This was the argument that brought Jackson into the fray on Graham's behalf. He criticised Rutherford's 'rather tortuous attempt' to find *Iudeu* in *Evidensca*, a place-name that in any case had been dismissed in 1979 as a ghost of *Habitancum*, the Roman fort at Risingham in Northumberland, as part of the revolutionary work on the Ravenna Cosmography carried out by Rivet and Smith.<sup>62</sup> This contribution to the 'half way along it' reading of *in medio sui*, first introduced by Richmond and Crawford, may now be regarded as beyond redemption.

#### *Cramond Island*

Since the 1870s, then, Inchkeith, Inveresk and Cramond have been considered and rejected by scholars as plausible potential locations for Iudeu. New evidence has not come to light to restore any of these to credibility since Graham rejected them. If the present writer is correct that Stirling is to join them in the list of discarded hypotheses, those who would persist in seeking to identify Iudeu are left with Hunter Blair's half-hearted suggestion of Cramond Island, alone among all the candidates that have been put forward since the days of Skene. It is certainly reasonable that the island can have been under Northumbrian dominion at the time of the massacre of Maes Gai (Bede's battle of the *fluuius Uinued*) in 655, as *Historia Brittonum* has it.<sup>63</sup> If Graham's argument is accepted that Iudeu ought to have been somewhat on a par with Clyde Rock, one is reminded that Jackson (who did accept it) described Clyde Rock as 'a high volcanic cone which was at that time almost totally an island, joined to the land by only a narrow neck – a site which must have been regarded as ideal for a fortress in the conditions of the period'.<sup>64</sup> Jackson and Graham believed it was the height of Clyde Rock that had to be replicated at Iudeu. Had he considered at greater length his own description of the place, however, Jackson might have noticed that the tidal Cramond Island is similar to Clyde Rock in every strategic respect other than its height.

At high tide Cramond Island is separated from the shore by 1200 metres of sea at its nearest point, which seems convincing enough

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 442–4.

<sup>62</sup> Jackson, 'Bede's *Urbs Giudi*', 6–7; Rivet and Smith, *Place-Names of Roman Britain*, 371; for their discussion of the Ravenna Cosmography, see *ibid.*, 185–215, especially 190–200. In fact, the equation of *Evidensca* and *Habitancum* was known (and rejected) by Richmond and Crawford, 'British section of the Ravenna Cosmography', 14. Note that the etymology proposed by Breeze, 'Some Celtic place-names' (2004), 59–60, if accepted, would also tend to preclude an earlier *\*Eiudei*.

<sup>63</sup> Bede, *HE*, iii.24 (Colgrave and Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 290–1).

<sup>64</sup> Jackson, 'Bede's *Urbs Giudi*', 3, 4.

to satisfy an insular reading of *in medio sui*. At some twelve hectares, the island dwarfs the crown of Clyde Rock, and could have supported a substantial *urbs* indeed. It happens that the island was occupied by a battery in the Second World War, however, and as yet it has produced very little archaeology to support the existence of Early Historic settlement, though small finds of Early Historic date have been unearthed at Cramond itself, including a bronze finger ring bearing an Anglo-Saxon runic inscription.<sup>65</sup> It may be deemed something of a further problem for its candidacy as Iudeu that a Celtic place-name for Cramond Island, *Leverith*, has survived as a matter of record, even if it has since become obsolete.<sup>66</sup> An identification of the island as the location of Iudeu, while plausible, is not decisive in the absence of more evidence, unless one is prepared to place great stock in the possibility that the description of its siege in 655 in *Historia Brittonum* is part of a wider British narrative interest in island-sieges. However, if Cramond Island is rejected, the insular reading of *in medio sui* must also be rejected, as there is no other island in the estuary that fits all the textual evidence pertaining to Iudeu's location and situation.

#### *Carlingnose Battery*

Having identified problems with Cramond Island, scholars in search of Iudeu are left with no convincing candidates from among those that have thus far been put forward in print. Additional possibilities may, however, be raised. Thanks to Graham's cogent thinking, we may accept that, if Bede really meant to say that Iudeu lay in a coastal location halfway along the Firth of Forth, he ought to have described its position in terms similar to those he used for Clyde Rock. It is important that this argument does not rule out a coastal location: in fact, Richmond and Crawford were surely correct that, in the absence of an insular location, a coastal one is implied by the fact that the *urbs* gave its name to its estuary. The implications of Graham's argument are, rather, that *in medio sui* meant something other than 'halfway along it'. Campbell has shown that the *urbs* ought to be a native stronghold, not one of Roman provenance, and builders of native coastal strongholds in northern Britain in the Early Historic period preferred sites on

<sup>65</sup> Cessford, 'Post-Severan Cramond'.

<sup>66</sup> Cramond Island is *insula Leverith* in a papal bull of 1208 preserved in the Inchcolm cartulary; D. E. Easson and Angus MacDonald (eds), *Charters of the Abbey of Inchcolm* (Edinburgh, 1938), §IX (see also §XLV). The identification of the two islands is made by Bower (Simon Taylor and D. E. R. Watt (eds), *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower*, vol. v (Aberdeen, 1990), 426), whose abbey possessed it. He calls it *insula Levery prope Cramond*, where, in the days of King Alexander III, 'some very rich Lombards' came to Scotland and failed to convince the king that they should be allowed to build a *civitas* on Cramond Island. See also, Easson and MacDonald (eds), *Charters of the Abbey of Inchcolm*, §VI (*insula que est ante portum de Caramund*). For a possible etymology for *Leverith*, see Andrew Breeze, 'Some Celtic place-names of Scotland, including *Dalriada*, *Kincarden*, *Abercorn*, *Coldingham* and *Girvan*', *Scottish Language* 18 (1999) 34–51. I am grateful to Dr Breeze for drawing his work to my attention.

craggy promontories like Clyde Rock.<sup>67</sup> However else we seek to locate suitable sites, it is well to leave aside baseless assumptions relating to Bede's mental maps. It is also well to acknowledge Professor Jackson's argument that locating a mid-point in the Forth estuary in the eighth century ought to have been subjective, rather than an enterprise in precise measurement or calculation.<sup>68</sup>

In abstract spatial terms, the most obvious 'mid-point' of the estuary to the present writer, who has some experience of traversing sometimes substantial inland waters, is not Stirling, but surely where the waters narrow to a breadth of only some two kilometres between North and South Queensferry, with Inch Garvie between them, increasing the sense of narrowness. The survival of a thoroughly appropriate Celtic place-name, 'rugged island', may militate against the already unlikely suggestion that Inch Garvie was Iudeu, though the name is Gaelic rather than British. On the other hand, an Early Historic native stronghold on the headlands hereabouts would demand attention, were evidence of such a settlement ever discovered. The high spur of rock overlooking the estuary here from the north coast, now the Carlingnose Battery in North Queensferry, is particularly fascinating in this regard.<sup>69</sup> The fourteenth-century Scottish chronicler John of Fordun, in his retelling of the longer twelfth-century St Andrews foundation-legend, may have something to offer this promontory's candidacy as Iudeu. Fordun's source relates that the head of *Adhelstanus*, an English king, was taken in victory by *Hungus*, a Pictish king, and set upon a stake 'in the place that is called *Ardchinnechena* <m>, below the harbour that is now called the Queen's Harbour'.<sup>70</sup> This place may be our promontory. Fordun, however, related that this trophy was placed upon a rock *in medio maris Scottice*, a striking phrase indeed from the standpoint of the present investigation, if Fordun intended 'in the middle of the Firth of Forth' to denote *Ardchinnechena* <m>.<sup>71</sup> Certainly no *prima facie* reason is provided by any of our early medieval sources (such as an ethnic attribution) that Iudeu, if it lay on the coast of the estuary, must have lain on the Lothian side, as has always been assumed by

<sup>67</sup> For discussion, see for example Ian Ralston, *Celtic Fortifications* (Stroud, 2006), 26–8.

<sup>68</sup> Jackson, 'Bede's *Urbs Giudi*', 3.

<sup>69</sup> Andrew Robertson, 'Parish of Inverkeithing', in Donald J. Withrington and Ian R. Grant (eds), *The Statistical Account of Scotland 1791–1799*, edited by Sir John Sinclair, vol. x (East Ardsley, 1978), 406, indicated that the first battery on the Carlingnose site was established in the late eighteenth century, 'after [John] Paul Jones appeared, with his small squadron, and alarmed the coasts'.

<sup>70</sup> William F. Skene (ed.), *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots, and Other Early Memorials of Scottish History* (Edinburgh, 1867), 184. A new edition of this text is in preparation; see Simon Taylor, 'The coming of the Augustinians to St Andrews and Version B of the St Andrews foundation legend', in Simon Taylor (ed.), *Kings, Clerics and Chronicles in Scotland 500–1297* (Dublin, 2000), 115–23. I am grateful to Dr Taylor for indicating to me in correspondence that *Ardchinnechena* <m> is preferable to Skene's *Ardchinnechun*.

<sup>71</sup> W. F. Skene (ed.), *Johannis de Fordun, Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, *Historians of Scotland* vol. i (Edinburgh, 1871), 157.

proponents of the 'half way along' thesis. Unfortunately, it is by no means certain that Fordun did intend to describe *Ardchinnechena* <m> as *in medio maris Scottice*. He can just as easily have been taking license with his source, and Walter Bower, with his personal knowledge of the Firth of Forth as a resident of Inchcolm Abbey, took Fordun to be indicating Inch Garvie.<sup>72</sup> In any case, *Ardchinnechena* <m>, which may or may not be the Carlingnose promontory, clearly retained its Celtic place-name as late as the twelfth-century, and that place-name was not *Iudeu*. Here again we seem to have a plausible, but hardly conclusive candidate.

### *Blackness*

Another approach to the question is possible, which may produce pleasing results, relying as it does upon current critical methodology regarding texts like Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* with its vital evidence pertaining to *Iudeu*'s location. Too much emphasis has arguably been placed on Hunter Blair's idea, taken up by Graham, that Bede was contrasting the positions of Clyde Rock and *Iudeu*. It could just as easily be said that he saw them as linked in some other conceptual way. In fact, in addition to noting that *urbs Alcluith* lay *ad dexteram* of the Firth of Clyde, and *iuxta fluvium Cluit*, Bede noted that it was also *iuxta* the western terminus of the Antonine Wall. The actual distance is some four and a half kilometres eastwards as the crow flies from Dumbarton Rock to Old Kilpatrick. It has already been observed that *Historia Ecclesiastica* introduced *Iudeu* in a chapter concerned with the erection of the two Roman walls. The eastern terminus of the Antonine Wall, as already noted, was at Carriden, six kilometres west of Abercorn. The name *Kair Eden* was recorded in two *capitulae* or chapter-headings added to a copy of Gildas's *De excidio Britanniae* at Sawley between 1164 and 1214, referring to its position at the east end of the wall.<sup>73</sup> One of these *capitulae* observes that the *muris* extended *a Kair Eden* in the east to a place in the west *iuxta urbem Alcluth*.<sup>74</sup> Such a link between these two places, formed by the Antonine Wall, is worth considering in the context of a conceptual link between *Iudeu* and Clyde Rock in Bede's mind.

It is possible to get overly clever about Carriden once this link is contemplated. Even earlier in date than the Sawley spellings of *Kair Eden* is a twelfth-century charter (*ca* 1148) in which the *ecclesia de Karreden* was given over to Holyrood Abbey by Robert, bishop of St Andrews.<sup>75</sup> The place-name is quite clearly one of the many *caer*

<sup>72</sup> J. and W. MacQueen (eds), *Scotichronicon by Walter Bower*, vol. ii (Aberdeen, 1989), 310. I am grateful to Thomas Owen Clancy for bringing these references relating to *Ardchinnechena* <m> to my attention, and to Simon Taylor, for further assistance with this place-name.

<sup>73</sup> Watson, *CPNS*, 370; Dumville, 'Eastern terminus', 295–6.

<sup>74</sup> Dumville, 'Eastern terminus', 296.

<sup>75</sup> Archibald C. Lawrie (ed.), *Early Scottish Charters Prior to A.D. 1153* (Glasgow, 1905), 165–6 (§ccvi); Watson, *CPNS*, 370.

toponyms in Scotland associated with a Roman fortified place. It is attested at least once in the fourteenth century as *Caridyn*.<sup>76</sup> This spelling might give one pause, since a specific element *-iden* requires the unproblematic emendation to *-ideu* to begin to approximate *Iudeu*. The twelfth-century spellings are robust evidence that this part of the name was being pronounced /eden/ or /iden/ at that time, and not /eðeu/ or /iðeu/ as one would expect from a hypothetical *\*Caer Iodeo*. However, suppression of local pronunciation in favour of pronunciation derived from a spelling is not impossible. This point is conveniently established here at Carriden in more recent times. Not only has the stress come to fall upon the first syllable – making Sawley’s *Kair Eden* indispensable in establishing that the first element is indeed *caer* – but by the end of the eighteenth century the local pronunciation was /carrin/.<sup>77</sup> As Jackson noted, the present name and pronunciation of Carriden must have bedded down in popular parlance ‘due to the influence of traditional spellings’.<sup>78</sup> Thus it might be proposed that something similar had happened to the hypothetical *\*Caer Iodeo* by the twelfth century, due to misspellings, transforming it into *Kair Eden*. On the whole, however, such an attempt to connect Carriden with *Iudeu* by virtue of its name can only be regarded as special pleading, in line with some of the finer examples on display above.<sup>79</sup> After all, Bede’s use of *urbs* in relation to *Iudeu* is good evidence that the place was not Roman in provenance.

Setting Carriden itself aside, then, Sawley’s much later association of the two neighbourhoods at either end of the Antonine Wall remains an important point of reference. Both neighbourhoods were known to Bede, and – more to the point – he gave them unique mention in *Historia Ecclesiastica* where he was otherwise very reticent about the geographies of the Forth and Clyde basins. He cannot otherwise be shown to have mentioned any place east of Abercorn or west of the Antonine Wall. These factors invite the question as to whether or not *Iudeu* simply lay along (or perhaps opposite) the same stretch of West Lothian coastline as Carriden, Kinneil and Abercorn. Following Graham’s example of proceeding from a consideration of Bede’s geographical understanding, in other words, it is unproblematic to suppose that *Iudeu* was mentioned by him in *Historia Ecclesiastica*, unlike the district of *Niuduera* or *Din Baer*, because it lay in (or perhaps

<sup>76</sup> Watson, *CPNS*, 370. For further attestations and discussion, see Angus MacDonald, *The Place-Names of West Lothian* (Edinburgh, 1941), 25–6.

<sup>77</sup> George Ellis, ‘Parish of Carriden’, in Withrington and Grant (eds), *The Statistical Account of Scotland 1791–1799*, edited by Sir John Sinclair, ii, 718; another instance of this pronunciation in 1728 is quoted by Bailey and Devereux, ‘Eastern terminus’, 99. MacDonald, *Place-Names of West Lothian*, 26, notes assimilation with Welsh *cardden*, interesting for sharing its /ð/ with *Iudeu*.

<sup>78</sup> Jackson, ‘Edinburgh’, 39.

<sup>79</sup> Dumville, ‘Eastern terminus’, 297. Older attempts to link Carriden with *Caer Eidyn* in the ‘A-text’ of the *Gododdin* elegies (*Gododdin*, l. 140), were dispatched by Jackson, ‘Edinburgh’, 39.



opposite) West Lothian like Abercorn, and was linked in his mind with Clyde Rock because they were the native strongholds that dominated the districts at either terminus of the Antonine Wall. This suggestion may be likened to Graham's idea that the two strongholds were thought by Bede to have been the principal ones on each estuary, but refined to suggest that they were the chief places in the immediate neighbourhoods at either end of the wall. If such an hypothesis is accepted, it seems unnecessary to assume solely from Bede's language that Iudeu was 'comparable with Dumbarton Rock' in any strategic or physical sense, which Bede elsewhere calls *munitissima*, most secure.<sup>80</sup> Hunter Blair suggested that Iudeu could have been the stronghold from which the Bernicians defended their northern frontier, which, if true, ought to have made it eminent enough to be mentioned in the same 'breath' as Clyde Rock.<sup>81</sup>

This line of thinking may, on the one hand, lend an additional layer of likelihood to the Carlingnose hypothesis, since that promontory lies opposite West Lothian, within easy reach of Abercorn and Carriden, and intervisible with both. Another possibility may, however, be considered. There are no islands in the Forth in the vicinity of Carriden or Abercorn, but between their two headlands – indeed at the border of their parishes – lies Blackness Castle on its rocky promontory, the Black Ness itself. This site has lost its Celtic place-name. It is a little less than three kilometres west of Abercorn (just under two miles) in the position that Bede erroneously placed *Peanfahel*. Did he give the distance to *Iudeu* by mistake? It is more likely, as already observed, that this distance was measured from the western boundary of Abercorn's *possessio*. A putative *urbs* upon the Black Ness ought to have been comparable to that of Clyde Rock, save for the height of the latter, and, although the Black Ness is much lower than one expects of promontory forts, the fortification of low promontories is not unknown. Perhaps Bede acknowledged this difference by describing *urbs Alcluith* as *munitissima*. That being said, there is a fifteenth-century reference to the Black Ness as *mons et rupes de Blacnes*, the 'mount and rock' in question suggesting that the promontory had a measure of height about it, if only relatively so.<sup>82</sup> Given the erection of a castle at the site in the fifteenth century, as well as the subsequent establishment of seventeenth-century fortifications and gun-emplacements there (as at Carlingnose and, later, at Cramond Island), followed by its having been made the central ammunition depot of Scotland in the early nineteenth century, it is not surprising that the small amount of archaeological work conducted at the castle site has mainly established various phases of substantial

<sup>80</sup> Graham, 'Giudi', 63; Bede, *HE*, i.1 (Colgrave and Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 20–1).

<sup>81</sup> Hunter Blair, 'Bernicians', 171–2.

<sup>82</sup> James Balfour Paul (ed.), *The Register of the Great Seal of Scotland*, vol. ii (Edinburgh, 1882), 181 (§857). For other early forms of the place-name, see MacDonald, *Place-Names of West Lothian*, 27.

demolition. The promontory and surrounding area have produced some Iron Age and Roman material, but it remains an open question whether or not a promontory stronghold stood on the Black Ness in Early Historic times that might have been Iudeu.<sup>83</sup>

If that were the case, one would need to reconcile its position with *in medio sui*. Certainly the Black Ness lies roughly at the midpoint between Abercorn and the Wall, a medial position that could have been reinforced conceptually by being situated at the frontier between two adjacent districts, the forerunners of Abercorn and Carriden parishes. However, the subject of the phrase *in medio sui* is clearly the estuary, and it is preferable to understand it as indicating that Iudeu was somehow wreathed by the waters of the Forth, not unlike Carlingnose. If it lay upon the conspicuous promontory of the Black Ness, some four hundred metres in length, Iudeu would have been surrounded by water on three sides except at low tide. Moreover, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland reports that the Black Ness was ‘formerly bounded on the south [i.e. at its landward end] by a sea marsh’. It therefore seems that an eighth-century *urbs* here could have been sufficiently insular in character to justify Bede’s Latin, while at the same time lying at the heart of the West Lothian coastline that represents the only part of the Forth basin that Bede described in any detail in *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

#### *Final Thoughts*

The enterprise of identifying Iudeu somewhere in the Forth basin on the basis of scrappy textual information has not been neglected by scholars. For almost fifty years the Castle Rock at Stirling has commanded confidence virtually unopposed. Prior to that, as befits the vagaries of the texts, scholars were treated to forty years of debate on the matter, revolving around how best to translate Bede’s phrase *in medio sui*. This paper has sought to reopen that former debate, not least by suggesting that, wherever Iudeu may have been, we may feel assured that it did not lie upon the Castle Rock at Stirling. Three locales that seem much more suitable to the written evidence have been proposed above, none of which is entirely unproblematic, and no definitive identification of Iudeu is possible at present. If pressed the present writer would point first to Carlingnose Battery, which unlike the other two sites is a classic example of the kind of promontory that Early Historic fort-builders preferred to fortify, as well as lying opposite West Lothian and in the Forth narrows, a plausible interpretation of *in medio sui*. However, the Black Ness and Cramond Island ought not to be ruled out lightly. The surviving written record can take us only so far.

<sup>83</sup> I summarise here information derived from CANMORE, the online database of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland ([www.rcahms.gov.uk](http://www.rcahms.gov.uk)).

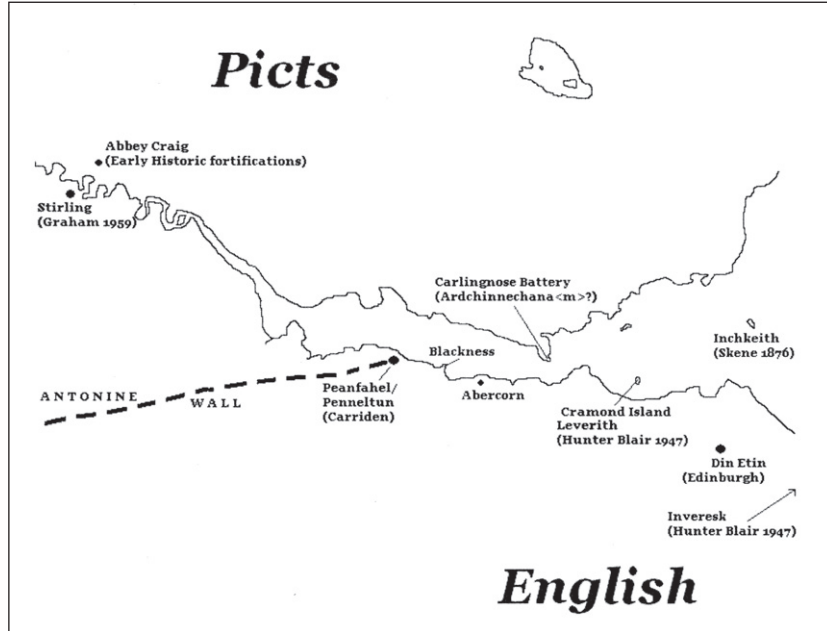


Figure 1: The Forth estuary, with sites mentioned in the text (sites formerly identified with Iudeu include a bibliographic reference to the key study).

If the debate is to be settled, it is likely to be so only at the end of the spade and the trowel.<sup>84</sup>

## APPENDIX

### *usque in manu Pendae*

The story of *Athret Iudeu* in the sixty-fourth and sixty-fifth chapters of the anonymous ninth-century *Historia Brittonum* appears in just two manuscripts, both in the British Library in London. The text copied in British Library MS Cotton Vespasian D. XXI says that at Iudeu Oswy gave back all the riches that were with him *usque in manu Pendae*, ‘all the way [i.e., ‘right’] into the hand of Penda’. However, the text copied in British Library MS Harley 3859 says that he gave up these

<sup>84</sup> I am grateful to Simon Taylor and Alex Woolf for several stimulating discussions of Iudeu over the years that this paper has been in preparation, and in particular for their company on excursions in pursuit of Iudeu. Like them, Thomas Owen Clancy has commented upon a draft. I alone bear responsibility for these end results.

riches *usque in manau Pendae*, 'all the way into Manau to Penda'.<sup>85</sup> The most accessible recent publication of the text purports to give the Harleian readings with transparent emendations from elsewhere, but here silently prefers the Cottonian alternative *usque in manu* to the Harleian *usque in manau*.<sup>86</sup> In 1908 Alan Anderson published the latter reading, but Manau, the plain straddling the lower River Forth, has figured remarkably little in subsequent discussion of the location of Iudeu.<sup>87</sup>

In the first of his considerations of the evidence, Hunter Blair stated, with perhaps a touch of regret, that 'so far as I know there is no direct evidence for associating *urbs Giudi* with the kingdom of Manau'.<sup>88</sup> Seven years later he had become aware of the sources collected by Anderson, and was attracted by the *usque in manau* reading, but did not think that 'half way along' the Forth estuary in Midlothian and *in manau* were not mutually exclusive geographical pointers.<sup>89</sup> It is particularly striking that Angus Graham did not use *usque in manau* to support his argument in favour of Stirling, which lay at the heart of Manau. Jackson too ignored it in 1963 and 1981. A possible explanation revolves around the fact that Mommsen's standard edition of the text in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* had preferred *usque in manu*, giving it priority over *usque in manau*, which was consigned to a footnote. The word *manau* may have been unfamiliar to him.

Anderson's translation of *reddidit . . . omnes divitias . . . usque in manau Pendae* as 'he rendered all the riches, as far as to Manau, to Penda' is problematic, as one would expect 'as far as Manau' to be *usque ad Manau* (or perhaps *usque Manau*), with Manau moreover in the accusative case. The latter point is not a problem, because the anonymous historiographer was not inclined as a rule to decline his vernacular personal and place-names with Latin suffixes. However, in the previous sentence he wrote that Penda took allies *in expeditione usque ad urbem quae vocatur Iudeu*, 'on the expedition as far as the *urbs* that is called *Iudeu*', demonstrating the expected use of *usque ad* plus accusative to denote 'as far as' some place. The translation thus should be 'he gave back all the riches, all the way into Manau, to Penda', which is distinctly awkward.

<sup>85</sup> For London, British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian D. XXI see Theodor Mommsen (ed.), *Chronica Minora saec. IV. V. VI. VII*, vol. iii, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctorum Antiquissimorum XIII* (Berlin, 1898), 208; for London, British Library, MS Harley 3859, see Faral (ed.), *Légende Arthurienne*, 43–4. I am grateful to Alex Woolf for assisting me in verifying the manuscript readings from facsimiles.

<sup>86</sup> John Morris (ed.), *Nennius: British History and the Welsh Annals* (London, 1980), 79 (and introductory note by R. B. White).

<sup>87</sup> Anderson, *Scottish Annals*, 24n–25n.

<sup>88</sup> Hunter Blair, 'Origins of Northumbria', 28. This statement, which looks rather odd out of context, represents a segue from a discussion of Lothian to a discussion of Manau.

<sup>89</sup> Hunter Blair, 'Bernicians', 164–5 (with citation of Anderson, *Scottish Annals*, 164n). See also Koch, *Gododdin*, lxxv(n).

The reading *reddidit... omnes divitias... usque in manu Penda* is also problematic, as one would expect 'right into the hand of Penda' to be *usque in manum Penda*, using the accusative form of *manus* rather than the ablative *manu*. However, feminine fourth-declension *manus* behaves like the neuter in the dative case (*manu* rather than *manui*), and the anonymous historiographer may have mistakenly used the neuter accusative *manu* here instead of feminine *manum*. Another possibility is that he instinctively used ablative *manu* after *in*, forgetting that *usque in* called for the accusative. Either of these possibilities seem like very understandable idiosyncrasies of latinity, and it must be admitted that the translation is very straightforward, which is probably why Mommsen (and others) preferred this reading.

However, *in manau* is a very strange mistake to have made in the copying of an exemplar's *in manu*. It is difficult to explain as a simple misreading. The place-name *Manau Guotodin* occurs in the sixty-second chapter, but it is difficult to see how this can have affected a reading of *in manu*.<sup>90</sup> It would be easier to explain away *in manu* as an emendation on the part of a twelfth-century scribe unfamiliar with the word *Manau*, were it not for the comfortable translation of *usque in manu[m]*, as compared to the uncomfortable *usque in manau*. Perhaps the possibility ought to be admitted that *in manu* was miscopied as *in manau* because the exemplar of the Harleian recension was copied by a scribe who made some kind of connection in his mind between *Albret Iudeu* and the plain of *Manau*.

Were one to accept such an hypothesis, or indeed to prefer the *usque in manau* reading as against *usque in manu*, an identification of *Iudeu* as a stronghold upon the Black Ness would not be adversely affected. A battle fought between Northumbrians and Picts in 711 was fought 'in the plain of Manau' (*in campo Manonn*) according to Irish chronicles, and 'between the Avon and the Carron' (*betwix Haefe 7 Caere*), according to the 'E' manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (the so-called Peterborough Chronicle).<sup>91</sup> Blackness Castle lies nine kilometres or so east of the River Avon. The idea that a Northumbrian king located here might give up 'all the riches that were with him in the *urbs* all the way from Manau' would not be problematic. Perhaps none of the three possibilities outlined above need suffer overmuch from such a reading. Note that *reddidit* here is as likely to mean 'he gave back' as the more conventional translation 'he rendered', and Old Welsh *atbret* implies that 'gave back' is to be preferred. The idea that Oswy's riches at *Iudeu* had come from *Manau* or other British regions, no doubt as tribute, and were now 'returned' and distributed to British kings in Penda's company, is a different reading than Bede's seemingly related story in *Historia Ecclesiastica*, told from an English perspective.

<sup>90</sup> Faral (ed.), *Légende Arthurienne*, 42; Mommsen (ed.), *Chronica Minora*, 205.

<sup>91</sup> AU 711.3; AT 711.3; Anderson, *Scottish Annals*, 50n; S. Irvine (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: a Collaborative Edition*, vol. vii, MS. E (Cambridge, 2004), s.a. 710.

Keeping in mind the British perspective of *Historia Brittonum*, its version of events is hardly inadmissible for seeing things differently from Bede's sources.<sup>92</sup> It requires the expertise of Professor Dumville and his definitive edition of *Historia Brittonum* to establish the character of its author's latinity, and whether *usque in manu Pendae* or *usque in manau Pendae* is the preferable reading of the text at this point.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Bede, *HE*, iii.24 (Colgrave and Mynors (eds), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 290–1). Doubts that Bede and the anonymous historiographer were telling the same story have been raised by David Dumville, 'The historical value of the *Historia Brittonum*', *Arthurian Literature* 6 (1986) 1–26, at 16.

<sup>93</sup> David N. Dumville (ed.), *The Historia Brittonum*, vol. iii, *The 'Vatican' Recension* (Cambridge, 1985), is the first, and so far the only, volume in the ten-volume edition envisioned by Professor Dumville. Unfortunately, this recension does not include the chapters of interest to this paper.